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EPA to sue Reading waste disposal firm

By Douglas Starr
Post Staff Reporter

So much chemical waste is leaking from a Reading hazardous waste site that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has decided to prosecute the owners, including a University of Cincinnati professor who teaches courses in environmental engineering.

James McAvoy, director of the Ohio EPA, today referred the case of Pristine Inc. to the state attorney general's office for litigation. Agency sources could not say when they expect to file the civil charges.

Fewer than 6000 55-gallon drums of waste chemicals are stored at Pristine, a waste processing firm, next to the Mill Creek. But state investigators say they have found enough leaking poisons to warrant concern.

SAMPLES TAKEN at the Pristine site showed 114 organic chemicals leaking from the incinerator on the property to a ditch leading to Mill Creek. These

include suspected carcinogens toluene, dichlorobenzene, trimethyl benzene and propyl benzene. Poisonous chromium and mercury were found leaking into the stream.

Many drums on the property reportedly contain azide compounds, some of which are explosive. "He's probably got enough there to level the whole area," said Miles Datesman, the Ohio EPA scientist who's been sampling the area since the fall.

Ohio EPA staff attorney Jenny Tiell said the state is preparing litigation on two counts of water pollution for leaking chemicals and one count of air pollution, for gases escaping from Pristine's incinerator.

CHAIRMAN OF the board of Pristine is Dr. Riley N. Kinman, a UC professor of civil and environmental engineering who is doing waste disposal research under a federal contract and has given lectures to professional and citizens groups on hazardous waste

disposal. He could not be reached for comment.

A manager at Pristine who asked not to be named said, "I'm amazed this is coming up. My records show we are making week to week progress" in removing the drums.

State officials said that a significant reduction from the 8000 to 10,000 drums found at Pristine in November had taken place. But recent complaints about smoke coming from the property made state officials "a little edgy," said attorney Tiell. She added that the state was also moved to act by a growing federal government concern about the site.

Barbara Magel, an attorney with the federal EPA in Chicago said federal officials "are investigating it and have been for a few months."

PRISTINE HAD AGREED to reduce the inventory to 1000 drums by Sept. 21, 1980, and to dispose of five drums of chemicals for every one drum taken in. The

Reading Fire Department closed the Pristine operations from Jan. 22 to Feb. 19 for fire code violations.

The state is also preparing litigation against Cincinnati Drum Service Inc., a firm located next to Pristine at Big Four and Smalley roads, where heavy metals have been found seeping into Mill Creek. Some of the members of Cincinnati Drum's board of directors are part owners of Pristine, and Cincinnati Drums owns the property on which Pristine is located.

The air pollution permit under which Pristine operates its incinerator expires this month. State officials said they will probably put the permit on hold until all conditions for safe waste disposal are met.

"It's a small Chem-Dyne," said Tiell, comparing Pristine to the Hamilton waste site that was finally put into receivership after a four-year running battle with local and state authorities. "We don't want to spend time in court. We want to clean the thing up."

Worker's choice fatal in hotel fire

Enquirer Photo BY GERRY WOLFE

PRISTINE MANAGER Jack Salter pauses by incinerator at Reading

PRISTINE is accepting one drum of waste for every five it moves out, Kinman said.

MOVING THE old out is not that easy, Kinman said.